Interview with James W. Wine

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR JAMES W. WINE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: April 4, 1989

Q: Mr. Ambassador, before we begin discussing the period in your career as an ambassador, would you give us some information concerning your background which led to this?

WINE: I practiced law. I graduated from law school and went into the Army in 1942, returning to Kentucky to practice law. During that time I served in various capacities aside from teaching and the general practice of law. I had been active in the Presbyterian Church, and in the aftermath of the Senator Joseph McCarthy era, there was a broad-gauged attack on Protestant, and to some degree, Catholic ministers by a disparate fundamentalist group. They charged that the ministers of these various denominations, including the heads of the denominations, were a part of the communist apparatus.

Q: What made them think that?

WINE: It grew largely out of the fact that, at about that time in the late 1950s, most of the protestant denominations began to emphasize a “social gospel” as they called it. That strayed from fundamentalism. This particular group of people elected to put the lie to what I think the Protestant churches were trying to do at that time which was to lift up the social

questions in this country which had, heretofore, been largely ignored except by a few perceptive writers. It was very widespread and the attack became very vicious.

The then principal officer in the Presbyterian Church, whose headquarters was in New York at the time and whom I knew quite well, had discussed this at great length with me together with some others. As a layman and as a lawyer I was interested in this kind of thing.

They said, “How about taking some time off and seeing if you can't do something about this in the interests of people who really can't defend themselves?”

I took about 18 months and leave of absence and associated myself with the National Council of Churches, under whose aegis this defensive campaign began. For about 18 months, together with some other lawyers who volunteered their time, we concentrated across the country on trying to torpedo this kind of foolishness and drive these fellows back to where they really belonged. It really wasn't a theological debate. They tried to put that kind of face on it. It was actually more one of grasping for power at that time. This was sufficiently after World War II and the general public was coming back to and being a part of church activity across the country, the consequence of which was competition with the mainline churches.

In the course of that experience I became quite concerned about the whole matter of religious freedom and went into it in considerable detail. I attended many conferences with Catholics and Jews as well as Protestants that began to give much more visibility to the whole idea of religious freedom. This was between 1956 and 1959.

At the conclusion of that effort, John Kennedy became a candidate for president of the United States in early 1960. As I began to notice, some of the same crowd who had heretofore been attacking Protestants as communists became very vocal as critics of John Kennedy's candidacy as a Catholic. For those who remember, it was a very vicious kind of thing. Certainly, the criticisms were not limited solely to people who were church related

but were from political interests, monied interests, and special interests who opposed Kennedy's candidacy. They jumped onto and hid behind the religious bandwagon, so to speak, believing that that was where his greatest vulnerability was.

I began talking with people such as Ted Sorensen and Senator Kennedy in early 1960 about this whole matter of religious freedom, and more specifically about those who would try to establish a religious test for political office. I was moved at that point more by conviction and principle than by the candidacy of anyone in particular.

I became increasingly closely associated with Ted Sorensen, in particular, and others of the staff such as Ralph Dungan who later managed the White House staff. Before the West Virginia primary in March 1960 we had an ad hoc group that was consulting on this whole matter, and we concluded that it would be worthwhile to see if we could get a statement from the principal Protestant leaders in the United States, heads of denominations, so to speak, which would reflect what they believed was a real contest of convictions and which opposed the idea of a religious test for public office.

By force of circumstances alone, I assumed the responsibility for obtaining that particular statement. I knew these men personally by virtue of the previous eighteen months experience which I've described. At my invitation we met together in New York in February of 1960. After I explained the purpose, we were able to hammer out a multi-paragraph statement to which each of them subscribed in their capacity as heads of their respective Protestant denominations representing all of those in the United States.

We published that statement and it did have a salutary effect to a great extent, insofar as the church community was concerned as well as the opinion makers at the head of the church community. We then began to see, from the political viewpoint, that we had diluted, to a certain extent, the forcefulness of these criticisms on this particular issue. By no means did it do away with it. As a matter of fact, it had the effect in some circles to

increase the effort, money, and criticism on the part of those who opposed Mr. Kennedy's candidacy.

I became increasingly involved with that particular question, meeting from time to time with the campaign group, principally at the level of Ted Sorensen who had more or less within the campaign group taken charge of that particular issue—not solely, but he was the lead horse as far as those very close to Mr. Kennedy were concerned.

It was later suggested that this was such an issue that it became an integral part of the campaign and that it would be advisable to establish an organization within the campaign which would devote its time to this particular issue. I was invited to take charge and take that responsibility, which I accepted.

In the course of those months, I became much more personally acquainted with those very close to Mr. Kennedy and I found that we had a great deal in common. We shared thoughts of performance of responsibility at the highest level of excellence. Our world views were very similar, and certainly we shared the notion that a religious test as a precondition for candidacy for public office was dead wrong and had to be buried.

Q: Did you feel yourself as the outsider to begin with? You actually came in on a matter of principle and not that this candidate was the right person. Here were these cold-hearted political pros who just saw this as an obstacle. I'm sure the principle was there, but to them this was an obstacle. Here you were, coming from a legal practice and having dealt with the issue. You are also a practical person, but you were not on board as an early Kennedy man. There must have been quite an educational process to go through both from your point of view and theirs?

WINE: Yes. There was indeed. You've analyzed it correctly. My motivation was just as you have described. Of course, as I say, the more intimately acquainted we became, the closer our relationships became. We found that we were intellectually committed and in

agreement so that, just like topsy it grew. My own thoughts had expanded, never leaving the central proposition which motivated me in the first place to become a part of it.

So I did spend full time on that issue and I had no intention of coming into the government service. Having fought a war, I figured that that's about all the government service I was interested in at the time.

Q: Where had you been?

WINE: I was in the European theater of operation from 1942 until 1945. I had a “Cook's tour” of England, North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany.

Q: Which division were you in?

WINE: I was with the 34th Airborne Brigade.

In any event, Mr. Kennedy—and this I know as a matter of fact—hewed the line very carefully all during the campaign. There was never, to my knowledge, a promise to anybody about anything. His only comment to all of us, even those closest to him, was, “If I'm elected, I hope you'll help me.”

That was it. Of course, everybody responded in the affirmative and that was that. I had made plans to go on back to the practice of law in either New York or Washington. I hadn't made up my mind yet. After you go through a presidential campaign, it's rather a wearing process and you have to give yourself some time to put your feet up and reflect. Thanksgiving and Christmas were coming on and I thought that I had to think this through a little bit. I had a number of conversations with friends in different places about returning to the practice, during which time I was called by members who later became part of the Administration and asked if I would serve in the Administration. My response, as I recall it, was, “That's a rather broad statement. I guess I'll have to know what we're talking about. Be more specific.”

“Well, we're not sure.”

The transition, of course, was still going on. My memory was refreshed that we had committed ourselves to helping him and we were very much convinced about his presidency. We were very much convinced that we all had so much in common. We had grown up in the Depression, fought the war, and we felt as if there were things we could do. At least, this was our philosophical outlook.

Q: There really was a generational feeling there.

WINE: There's no question about that. The President in his inaugural address said something to the effect that “the torch has been passed to another generation.”

There was a very strong philosophical consensus among a lot of us, regardless of how we came into the campaign originally. The people involved under President Kennedy had what it took to achieve the kinds of things we thought ought to be achieved in post-World War II.

So I held myself in abeyance and still made some temporary contacts about returning to the practice of law. I was called and asked if I would be interested in serving in the State Department. It was well known among these people in the Administration about my interest in foreign affairs. We had had enough conversations back and forth through the months to know that. So I said, “Yes, I would be very much interested and it would depend upon some practical matters, family, etc.” I had four children.

Shortly I received a telephone call asking if I would be interested in becoming the Chief of Mission. I said, “Where?”

They said, “Israel or Luxembourg.”

I said, “Well, my wife and I both speak French. I helped re-take Luxembourg in World War II. If I have any kind of choice, I would be interested.”

They said, “There's more to it than that.”

My law practice had involved coal and steel, and Luxembourg was the seat of the European Coal and Steel Community as you well know.

Q: Which was the progenitor of the entire European community, the Common Market, etc.

WINE: Exactly. Even after the Treaty of Rome, many of the first organizational meetings were held in Luxembourg because they were already set up and had the membership of the Coal and Steel Community in place. They just changed the players. This fact was brought out. I said, “Yes, I am familiar with that.”

In general, those were the things that took me to Luxembourg.

Q: Could you explain what you were doing during the war in the Luxembourg area?

WINE: We were part of the 7th Army and Luxembourg had been occupied early on when France fell. The Germans were pushed back, and during the Battle of the Bulge Luxembourg was occupied again. In the process of the 7th Army moving eastward on the front, Luxembourg was in the 7th Army area and the troops comprising those with which I was a part moved through that corridor that re-took Luxembourg.

Q: How were you particularly interested in foreign affairs prior to joining the State Department?

WINE: I think not unlike anyone else who may have had advanced college degrees and who read a good deal more than the ordinary person. I think exposure to Europe in World War II as a very young man opened my eyes tremendously to first-hand cultural differences despite the circumstances of hostilities. It also reawakened my own

interest in history. John Sherman Cooper, who was the Senator from Kentucky and later Ambassador to India, and I were very close friends. John and I had many discussions about the United Nations during its infancy. At one point John suggested to me back in the mid-1950s that I ought to come to Washington and maybe look into some possibility of going into the State Department, particularly in the U. N. side where we had discussed a number of things.

So I came up and visited for two or three days, but it was a gradual growing thing. I found my own perspective in the world broadening considerably. I tried to inform myself and I was attracted to various publications, books, etc. which dealt largely with foreign affairs. I think it just became an integral part of me.

Q: Your experience is very typical of a generation of people who were informed citizens, particularly those who participated in the war. It put many people on a different course. It paralleled also the rise of the United States as a power in the world. Prior to that, our diplomacy was really almost marginal.

WINE: That's correct. We were just there.

Q: Yes, and with a couple of oceans in between. In going to Luxembourg, did you have any particular preparation for being the Chief of Mission from the State Department or the White House, any particular instructions?

WINE: Yes. I spent about six weeks in the Department, an extended period largely on my own initiative. I had a learning process to go through. I was fortunate to have conversations with a number of people from Averell Harriman on down talking about ambassadorial capacities.

I might mention that on one occasion I asked Averell Harriman, “I don't know anything about being an ambassador and I'm trying to learn.”

He said, “I'll give you two pieces of advice. Always know when to take one step backward when you're negotiating. The other one is to remember that there are two kinds of ambassadors: those who are interested in being and those who are interested in doing. Be the latter.”

Retrospectively, I think that those two cryptic statements were the best piece of wisdom that I've ever run across anywhere.

Q: I heartily agree. Of course, Luxembourg had the distinction of having too many ambassadors who were more impressed with “being” rather than “doing.”

WINE: That's what the Luxembourgers thought.

Q: How did you find the mission in Luxembourg?

WINE: It looked to me like it was a storekeeping proposition with very attractive people competent in their particular assigned tasks. They were not taking any initiatives and were not being required to, apparently, from what I could judge. I felt that there was a failure to assess certain important propositions. For example, Luxembourg's small army was integrated into and became a part of the United States Army for training purposes. In cases of hostility within the NATO plan, it would have been under U. S. command. This is the first time in American history that a foreign country's military had been made an integral part of the U. S. military. This presented some very interesting experiences over a period of time while I was there.

Secondly, the airport was built by the United States and was part of the NATO infrastructure, targeted to be used in the event of hostilities and built into the defensive plans of Europe.

There had never been the usual trade, commerce, and friendship treaty, so I took the initiative on that and negotiated it to mutual satisfaction.

The Luxembourgers, and not without justification, had a very negative view toward the Germans for the treatment that they had received. Several of the ministers, as a matter of fact, in the government while I was there had actually been taken over during the war and put into labor camps. They told me the stories of their experiences. As a consequence, I think one of the tasks was not to point out—which would have been a futile thing anyhow—to the Luxembourger that they couldn't afford to continue to be hostile to their neighbor but to try to work at creating a climate of better understanding, looking toward the future as to what Europe was going to be. They would have to work together at some point.

It was easier for an American to take that position than it was for anybody else, any of the other ambassadors from the other countries. While that was done persistently, it was done low-key by simply taking advantage of occasions in an effort to try to change—not necessarily in defense of or in favor of the Germans, but trying to create a better climate of harmony in Europe in that small country which was rapidly becoming the financial center.

Originally, Luxembourg was to be the general headquarters for the Common Market. Subsequent decisions put it in Brussels. The trade-off was that all of the participating partners would aid Luxembourg in becoming a financial center along the idea of Switzerland. They had good banking laws and they wanted better banking laws and to attract financial institutions, etc. A small country like Switzerland for generations was in an awfully good position to do something like that. They have been successful. So that was the trade-off, the consequence of which I had a modest hand.

Q: Did you have a feeling that Luxembourg was pushed aside by our concerns with France, Germany and England?

WINE: Yes, I think so. I think there had been a long history of benign neglect as far as the little country was concerned. The Department had not been, perhaps understandably so, in tune with the discussions that were going on within Europe to which I have just referred a moment ago—the trade-offs, the move to Brussels making it the financial

center, keeping the European high court in Luxembourg. These were the trade-offs that were made and I think the Department was quite tardy and was beginning to see the significance of those trade-offs that were made.

On the other hand, I remember particularly when Bill Tyler was Assistant Secretary for Europe. I remember when Bill Blue had the office of Western European Affairs. Both men and I became good friends, and in the course of numerous discussions and exchanges of correspondence and official cables, a lot of these things began to get more visibility and the significance began to be appreciated a good deal more.

Q: Were you aware of the battles within the State Department between the Europeanists who were looking at integrated Europe and pushing that—I think George Ball was the prime exponent of this—and those that said, "That's all very well, but we have relations with France, with Germany, with England, etc. Let's not get completely overwhelmed by this Europeanist thing." Did you find yourself involved in this?

WINE: I was very much aware of that and knew of this bifurcation of viewpoint within the department. I knew George Ball's position very clearly, but I also knew the position of a number of the career people and I found them divided on the particular point that you described. I think it was an intellectual political struggle that was going on with the best intention on both sides. I saw the world a little differently and, of course, outside the State Department there were various and sundry organizations that came into being such as the Atlantic Council which continue to exist and perpetuate this very strong feeling between the United States and Western Europe. There are a number of such organizations of which I'm sure you are as familiar as I. That viewpoint still exists and I'm watching it with a great deal of interest as we go toward 1992.

Q: That's the date of the full integration of Europe. Did you find yourself falling into a camp or were you between the individual country people and the integrated Europeanists? You were there from 1961 to 1962.

WINE: I don't think I became an apostle of either viewpoint. I think I appreciated what they were saying on both sides, but at that point I watched to see where the interests of the United States could best be served in the little country of Luxembourg as these two schools of thought began to emerge and gel.

I remember on one occasion a particular issue in Europe that taught me a good lesson. There was a man, the old man of Europe, Joseph Bech. He and Trygve Lie were the two first candidates for Secretary General of the United Nations. He was a Luxembourger and a long-time advisor to the royal family and government and always had been a part of it. Joseph Bech and I grew to be great friends.

I had an instruction to ask if he would take a certain position to the NATO Council in which the United States was very much interested. I went to see Mr. Bech and he said he wanted to make it very clear that he was sympathetic but that, in the context of the forum in which we were talking, if Luxembourg took the lead, he felt it would be rather silly because they did not have the military power to back up the proposition that he would introduce. He had no intention of making himself look silly. However, he would certainly be a party to any of the negotiations going on—the reason they selected him is because he was a man of considerable stature in Europe at the time. He felt it would be a serious mistake from the standpoint of Luxembourg itself to take the lead in that move for the reason I just mentioned. Q: How did you deal with the Luxembourg government? Who were your principal points of contact?

WINE: I was very fortunate in the fact that I had four children, twin sons, a family, and by far I was the youngest ambassador that they had had there. The Kennedy Administration was looked at most favorably. I was the unwitting beneficiary of all kinds of things for which I could not take credit under any circumstances. I was received with open arms in the most genuine, warm way. The Prime Minister who was also the Minister of Finance lived just one block from me and frequently, on Sunday afternoons, while walking with his family and I with mine, we would stop in and visit, have a cup of coffee and talk at great length. We

became very closely associated outside of official circumstances which was very helpful. This was an experience that occurred with considerable frequency. I remember sitting up in their front yard watching the Tour de France on one occasion. There was a big park just above the street there. As I said, on Sunday afternoons we found our families comingling, walking and talking. The wives established an excellent rapport. The Foreign Minister and I developed quite a good friendship as well.

When we had the first satellite that went up that had the transatlantic telephonic communications, I remember it was about two o'clock in the morning. We were all in the mayor's office downtown with all of the powers that be talking with the mayor of Albany, New York. We have pictures of that event. They felt like they were in direct contact for the first time with the United States on a large scale. These were little things which were symptomatic, I think, of the very warm relationship.

I might say, on the other side of the fence, they made it very clear to me that they didn't like it worth a damn that Luxembourg was used from time to time to send people over there who spent most of their time out hunting or simply giving parties, etc.

Q: Of course, one of the most famous ambassadors, probably the most famous ambassador there, was Perle Mesta.

WINE: She was a minister.

Q: She was a minister but she was renowned for giving parties in Washington.

WINE: It was a joke as far as Luxembourg was concerned.

Q: Of course it would be. In a way it was a joke in the United States, but it certainly does not reflect well on our relations with another country.

WINE: It did not at all.

Q: We're talking about Sunday ambassadors who really look upon certain assignments as a pleasure tour. Were you able to communicate this to the White House? Each administration seems to go through this process. Maybe they never learn or don't really care.

WINE: I'll give you my personal opinion about it. I've thought about it a good deal after having the privilege of the experience. I would refer you to Ted Sorensen's book, Kennedy, part of which deals with the method of selection of ambassadors, and more recently, Interviews With Robert Kennedy, which is a book that just came out last summer. It's just a collection of interviews. In both instances very specific reference is made to the selection process and the criteria that they established. That was one condition which was very clear in everybody's mind at the time. It's true that, looking back, President Kennedy undoubtedly rewarded some individuals who really didn't do a damn thing.

Q: Looking back and speaking as a professional Foreign Service officer, there was a feeling that there was more sense to many of the Kennedy appointments. There was an attempt to attain a degree of excellence that had been lacking in many cases. It wasn't perfect, but at least there was more of a sense that people outside the Foreign Service ranks were being sent because they had something particular to offer rather than just being a heavy contributor.

WINE: I think that was the essence and I think that was the intention. This was said in my presence more times than once. As I say, if one reads not just the two sources I gave you but others which reflect the thinking that went on, it would reinforce your conclusion. I saw a perceptible change in what I felt was the down-grading of ambassadors, particularly during the Kissinger years, when so many visiting firemen from Washington were sent to various countries as a matter of routine when there were problems here or there.

If I had been an ambassador in a country where they had sent someone, implicitly that would have said to me, “We're going to send somebody over who knows more about your

country and the problem than you do." They would have had my resignation in six hours. I think that was one thing that began to change the whole picture.

Subsequently, and this perhaps sounds like it's in a partisan sense, but it's something chronologically and historically true the way the successions came on. I'm not comparing individuals necessarily but only circumstances. I thought increasingly the role of ambassador was being diminished and oftentimes I couldn't blame the individual. I rather thought that the system was changing. Maybe this is what they wanted to do. I would call your attention to the May 11, 1961 letter that John F. Kennedy wrote to all ambassadors, with which I'm sure you are familiar. I think that pretty well set the tone as to what his viewpoint was regarding the role of ambassadors. I do not think that viewpoint exists at the present time.

Q: The letter you are referring to stated very specifically that the ambassador was in charge of everything dealing with the United States in a country.

WINE: Not only in charge but responsible for.

Q: Responsible for, and it was very well received and overdue. I think it goes out now as a routine but it's not really observed as much as one might say.

You were not in Luxembourg too long and then you went to the Ivory Coast. How did this come about? You went to Luxembourg in April of 1961 and you left in October of 1962.

WINE: I can only tell you what I've been told. The President of the Ivory Coast, Houphouet-Boigny, was the first African chief of state to have a state visit during the Kennedy Administration. Black Africa is, among other things, a personality cult. Houphouet-Boigny and John Kennedy got on personally very well. At this point I'm reciting what I've been told from the White House. On his departure he asked Mr. Kennedy, "When you send your ambassador down there, would you send somebody whom you know personally, because then I'll feel as if this linkage of friendship is being maintained."

It was explained to me that that was the trigger mechanism. Among those who were around at the time of the selection process, that was why I left early and in response to the request from Houphouet-Boigny. That was the President's response.

Q: How did you feel about this? Here you were in Luxembourg with your wife and four children and had established a good relationship in the country. Now all of a sudden you were going to a whole different place in Africa.

WINE: I was called on the phone from the White House and asked about it. I said, “I'm going to have to think about this a little bit. I don't even know where the place is.”

They said, “Well, send us a cable tomorrow.”

That day I did learn that Abidjan was probably the most modern city. I talked with friends on the phone in Paris who knew the Ivory Coast quite well. They told me about it. I was also interested in education. I understood that President Kennedy and Houphouet-Boigny had talked about the establishment of the university in Abidjan and that they were very much interested in having people in key places in Africa. This was a Presidential policy decision. Then there was a pause and he said, “Hell, you're an adventurer. You certainly shouldn't have any objection to going down there.”

I sent a cable the next day accepting.

Q: You were talking about the peripheral negotiations. How did the real one go when you went to your wife and told her? I speak as a retired Foreign Service officer who knows one's diplomacy begins absolutely at home. [Laughter]

WINE: No question about that. There was a long session that evening. We got out the maps and all of the printed material I could find. I had them send me a post report, of course. I had all the information I could get. Yes, it was a family decision. I certainly didn't make it in a vacuum. We were quite young, just in our mid-forties, and we thought it would

be an opportunity for a real experience and knowing the background of the reason for the selection, that polished somebody's ego a little bit, I guess, along with it and that was the family ego, not just mine. There was no reluctance on the part of the family, and so there was an affirmative decision collegially made. [Laughter]

Q: What was our perception of the Ivory Coast in relation to American interests there? We're talking about 1962.

WINE: Politically it was perceived as being, and was in fact, a showpiece made by the French. It was known that Houphouet-Boigny and De Gaulle were close friends. Houphouet-Boigny served in the Fourth Republic, as a matter of fact, as a minister. President Kennedy had no use whatever for De Gaulle, and I'm not suggesting any kind of unusual motive but it was thought that it might be a good idea to meet him on an even playing field in select countries that had more significance than Upper Volta or wherever. The French had paid an awful lot of money to develop Ivory Coast.

The second thing was that we were very much concerned about air space in West Africa at that time, keeping it exclusively American or certainly within the Western Alliance and precluding the Soviets from getting landing rights anywhere along the West Coast of Africa because it was such a close jump from there over to South America. One of our principal chores was that we selected Pan American Airlines and negotiated landing rights up and down the coast of West Africa, building into it certain rights carefully and which we successfully did.

We then paired Pan Am with assisting in the establishment of Air Afrique. That was part of the agreement. With the exception of Guinea, which had jumped the tracks and gone Soviet on us, but other than that we were able to protect the entire West Coast of Africa from the standpoint of air rights and precluding the Soviets from obtaining landing rights down there. That was a national security consideration.

I think it was believed by many with a long, long view that the continent of Africa might open up and become the bread basket of the world. I think also that there was an aspect of the whole civil rights issue involved dealing with blacks in Africa. Those were some of the kinds of things that went into the decision-making process. We had some first-rate folks in West Africa.

Q: Could we do a little compare and contrast? Luxembourg obviously has over time been treated as far as ambassadorial appointments has not always been treated well because we've sent too many people who throw parties or hunt. I assume this has had a reflection on our embassy and the staff there. There's no point in showing too much initiative if you're going to have somebody who is mainly going to be involved with the social list. Now you're in Africa at the time of greatest interest. The Kennedy Administration was interested in Africa, new countries were emerging, the Foreign Service was having a wonderful time. It was the first time that the professionals were able to get in there and really deal with things. How did you find the American staff in the Ivory Coast?

WINE: I had a splendid staff. It's with a great deal of pleasure to me personally to know that two members of that staff, young men, have since become ambassadors. One was Bob Oakley who is now Ambassador to Pakistan. It was a large embassy because we had regional security, defense attach#s, an airplane, regional agriculture, any number of different things. They are regional because of our location and the total communications situation was such that Abidjan would be a natural for that. As a consequence, we also had a very large Peace Corps.

Q: How did you find the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM)—helpful or not?

WINE: The man who was the incumbent, a nice chap, felt that he should have been appointed ambassador. This is not without precedent in the State Department. He never demonstrated this to me, but there was a deep resentment that he wasn't. There were communications that went back and forth and a successor was sent in the very near

future. He was first rate. He and his family were just first rate. The entire staff was the cream of the crop. Q: I think this does reflect where priorities go and where enthusiasm and real interest is. As ambassador there, what did you consider your prime tasks?

WINE: My first task was to look at the larger picture which had to do with the landing rights issue. We had a rather large AID program which I had to monitor very carefully. It got out of hand two or three times.

Q: How did that happen?

WINE: I'll give you one example. They had asked for help in their internal communications. When the AID communications group came, they found out that they wanted to develop a rather high-tech communications for the presidency, in the broad sense, so as to develop a network of communications for security purposes. This was an adjunct to the principal program but this was done rather quietly and without my knowledge in the beginning. Then I learned that AID was sending back messages that did not go through my hands or my designated person having to do with intercepts that these communications fellows had made concerning the communications that were going on within the government itself and the system we had established. I blew the roof off and I sent them all home and I dismissed the program.

The more successful ones had to do with assisting in their fishing industry, in their infrastructure, some roadways, airstrips, agriculture, etc. which were geared toward the inner-strengthening of the country's economy.

Q: One of the charges levied against the entire AID process which is not exclusively the United States but there was a tendency to build up the cities to attract people to African cities with the full cooperation of the local governments but destroying the agricultural base and agricultural life of those countries. Was this a problem in the Ivory Coast?

WINE: No, the opposite was true. Houphouet-Boigny had a very different view. He wanted to maintain the integrity of the villages and concentrated on expanding those throughout the country. He discouraged any migration into Abidjan. He designated centers for cotton and certain other kinds of agricultural products in one area as well as other kinds of things in another area, and he worked diligently at tribal integration so as to avoid the classic problems in Africa of tribal collisions from time to time. He had a marvelous program that did just that. He's never had one ounce of trouble among the tribes. He saw his country in its totality without a focal point in the sense that you suggested it.The French, on the other hand, saw it quite to the contrary. They wanted to build up Abidjan so I had to struggle with the French constantly on that.

Q: How did you deal with the French there? You were saying that the use of the Ivory Coast was a subtle ploy to bypass the De Gaulle-Kennedy antipathy.

WINE: We maintained a discreet distance. I had to respect the fact that there were still a number of French conseillers in the government as they went through a transition preparing the seats for the ministers, etc. I knew they were there, and I knew this was what Houphouet-Boigny wanted because he had people in there with experience. So I respected that.

On the other hand, I met them head on when the occasion demanded. An example of that was when I had the French ambassador call on me to tell me that the Peace Corps out in the country was teaching English and other subjects as well, and that education in the Ivory Coast was exclusively a French proposition. I called his attention to the fact that we had an agreement with the government of the Ivory Coast what the Peace Corps could do, and among other things it was to teach. As long as they were there, they were going to teach. It was just that simple.

I'd get complaints maybe twice a month from the field saying the French were up there harassing them. I'd go over to the French Embassy and raise hell with the French

ambassador telling him I wanted that stuff cut out. [Laughter] “If you want to kick them out, you go down and see the President and tell him to kick us out. Short of that, live with us.”

There were two ambassadors from France, the second of which was a personal friend of De Gaulle's [Laughter].

Q: He had learned his lesson.

WINE: Monsieur Le Trompet. He and I had some tangles, there's no question about that. The French positioned themselves such that the entire diplomatic corps was alienated as far as the French were concerned, particularly the diplomatic representatives, with the exception of one DCM. He was a first-rate chap. He saw things as they really were. He used to come over to my house, and I'd have my chief of station come over and have lunch at the pool. We'd swim and I'd invite him over and we'd just have a sandwich and talk. We learned a whole lot more from him than he learned from us. Nevertheless, we had an ally who was a genuine representative of his country and not out trying to win brownie points from De Gaulle every other damn day.

Q: Do I suspect that Houphouet-Boigny was sitting back and being both amused and taking advantage of the fact that he had two personal friends of these leaders playing in his yard?

WINE: A typical political ploy. There is no question in my mind about it. I think he was very genuine. I think his viewpoint towards France was very different than his viewpoint towards the United States, generally speaking. On the other hand, he saw this and knew this was there. I would never go down and crowd his doorstep. The French ambassador did many times because word had gotten back to me from the chief of protocol at the palace about what had happened. I had several sources where I kept up with what was going on here and there, all quite legitimate. He'd go down and whimper and cry around. Not once did I ever complain to the President about the French.

Q: Houphouet-Boigny is really a remarkable man among world leaders. How did you view him at the time? You've given us some aspects. In dealing with him personally, how did you find him? Why do you feel he developed into such a remarkable person?

WINE: His education was medical. He had a medical degree. He was quite sophisticated. As I said, he served in the Fourth Republic. Politically, he was the head for many years, before independence of the various countries, in the RDA, which was the political party of all the French colonies. So he was politically very savvy about the whole of West Africa and its relationship with Europe as well. He was also a very clever man. He protected his flanks. He's a quiet man and moved with great strength when he wanted to, but he usually achieved this in an indirect way as opposed to getting out on the stump and preaching a sermon about it. This is one of the ways he brought the tribal groups into community, for example. He had a very clear perspective in his own mind of the significance of the Ivory Coast and West Africa and Africa in general. We talked at length about that many times. He didn't think that an Organization of African States was of much value. He thought that was mostly a lot of baloney and that they'd never, despite the fact they meet once a year, with great visibility. They passed a lot of resolutions that they would not honor in a year or two and still acted their own ways. He didn't put much stock in that. I think he was a man that had a world vision. He was a man of deep compassion and I think he knew the limitations of his rule, of his government. He kept extraordinarily well informed about world matters and political matters in the United States and Europe.

Q: This was the height of the racial problems in the United States, the Freedom Riders, Martin Luther King, etc. As a very sophisticated world leader, how did he view the agony the United States was going through as well as the blatant segregation and animalism?

WINE: I had a long talk with him after the Martin Luther King's “March on Washington.” He, of course, had seen the television clips of Bull Connor's episode.

Q: We're talking about the Alabama police repression of black protesters.

WINE: That's right, using the water hoses and the dogs, etc. These were not just quick meetings of five-minute visitations. I knew what his signals were when it was time to go, but we talked at great length, most times at his insistence. He would say something like, “I've seen examples of man's inhumanity to man. It happens in this country.”

I have been in ceremonies way up-country where his police, when the crowd would come out to view the ceremony and they wouldn't move back, would take big sticks and whack them.

“I acknowledge these kinds of things. I have an appreciation for the history and the lack of evolving the black persona. It will probably be a philosophical attitude and will probably be a long struggle.”

He was very much impressed with the Martin Luther King leadership. His feeling was that there was a wealth of understanding, good will, and compassion in this country, and that given time, that problem would be not necessarily solved but alleviated in many ways. He was not hostile toward us or openly critical toward the United States, never in my presence. I think he'd seen it all, really, himself. That pretty well explains his views.

Q: Were you ever asked by Washington to sound our his views on something in order to pass back professional advice on how to deal with African affairs?

WINE: Yes, on numerous occasions. I would have to refer to the files, but I was instructed on numerous occasions to visit with him and to put certain questions to him. Even if I put it to him, he would be the kind of fellow who would say, “I would not presume to tell the American Government. It would just be his attitude. But he was very helpful to us in many ways at our request using other African chiefs of state at a time when the Red Chinese were moving with great strength down on the other side of the continent, Tanzania building railroads, etc. There were times when there were other matters that were based in Africa but involving outside powers, not the least of which was Sekou Toure in Guinea which

we tried to do some things about, but I don't think he openly succeeded in doing anything before Toure died. Then there were questions involving several countries in the region.

Q: How did you find the African Bureau in the Department of State? Mennen Williams was leading it and I've gotten two reflections on this. One was that those dealing in difficult states such as Guinea, Ghana, etc., there was a little two much overly-positive thinking about some of these leaders who really were not friendly to American interests or probably to their own country. I'm thinking of Sekou Toure and Nkrumah.

On the other hand, he brought a great deal of enthusiasm toward Africa and played a very important role in the Administration in developing interests in Africa. You were in one of the "good" countries, probably the best which has remained the best as far as the bright side of African development. How did you find the Mennen Williams direction?

WINE: I'm trying to think who his deputy was who went on to the Ford Foundation, a very able man and who knew what he was doing and moved professionally. The "hail fellow" back-slapping type of American was not appreciated positively in the Ivory Coast.

Q: Soapy Williams would fall into this category.

WINE: I guess so. Of course, not speaking the language made it difficult for him. I don't think he visited but one time and that was to buy African art. He bought a truckload of African art. I had the feeling that, outside of his deputy, he was very ineffective. I really don't have an opinion. I have impressions but I don't have an opinion about something with respect to the other countries. I know what went on.

Q: It didn't particularly intrude where you were.

WINE: No. Nobody intruded. [Laughter] I must say in one instance where the president called me down and said, "When am I going to get my grant for the university?"I said, "Well, I'll get right on that and find out."I knew about this before I left Washington. I knew

about it from the White House, not the State Department. I came back to the embassy and sent a cable to make the inquiry. I got a response back from somebody which said, “According to paragraph 501, subsection C, the Ivory Coast as well as all other former French colonies, the matters of education are exclusively in the French province. Therefore, we have no program.”

I thought, “I'm forced to call a chit.”

So I wrote President Kennedy and told him the story. Nobody is going to put me in this kind of position. I still have the original letter. He wrote up in the corner, “Jim Wine is right about this. See to it they get the support that they ask for.” I got it.

Q: This is where the politically appointed ambassador who knows the President can do something.

WINE: Yes, because I was a lost ball in the high weeds. I was being batted around with a number of paragraphs. I wouldn't have gotten [anything] out of it save coming home and doing battle and maybe not even then.

Q: A thesis that often comes up is that America's interests abroad are essentially driven by economics. How much would this pertain to our interests in the Ivory Coast at the time you were there?

WINE: I wouldn't say “driven by.” It certainly was one of the driving forces but it was not by any means predominant. I think we all recognized there was a building of a vast amount of volume of trade between the third world and the United States. I think that was being encouraged. The AID programs that we were involved in were obviously essentially economic but they went beyond that. Some of them were instructional.

Q: There were not commercial interests in the United States that you felt great pressure to do certain things with the Ivory Coast?

WINE: No.

Q: I'm asking about American commercial interests in the Ivory Coast.

WINE: No, it was cultivating the relationship, establishing some specifics within the broad policy of Africa and more particularly the west coast of Africa.

Q: You came back to Washington in 1967 and you spent some time as Special Assistant to the Secretary for Refugees and Migration. What did this job consist of?

WINE: It consisted largely of being concerned with, in part, legislation regarding refugees, but more particularly liaison with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, independent organizations dealing with refugees, both political, economic, etc. This was during a period of time when they were redefining what is a refugee and what are the rights of a refugee, etc. It was essentially more consultative at that time than anything else.

Q: In a way it was between times. There had been the great refugee problem after World War II and after the arrival of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and before the collapse of our interests in Indochina around 1975 or so, then later in Iran, etc. In a way it was not the eye of the storm that it later became and had been before.

WINE: No. During this period of time we were essentially working in cooperation with other agencies, governments and activities.

Q: Were there any particular problems that you had at that time?

WINE: I think none that stand out.

Q: Was there much concern by then Secretary Rusk on refugee and migration affairs?

WINE: No, I don't think there was a lot of interest in the department at all.

Q: Of course, the Vietnam War was going and the refugee side had not gotten into that yet. Looking back on your time with the Department of State, what gave you your greatest satisfaction?

WINE: I think the greatest satisfaction came from those quiet moments when you introspectively examined the responsibility that you had in terms of being the American representative in a foreign country representing our government to that government, and the broad benefits that flowed from the relationships which that office presented to you with leaders of the countries or the regions where you were, products of a different culture, sometimes in the very broadest sense. I think I could not answer that with any specificity.

I would have to say that it was a broadening of my own educational understanding of the world in which we live for which I was very grateful. I was pleased to have an opportunity from time to time to use my own initiative in doing things that I thought would achieve or work toward the achievement the policy of the United States as I understood it in the relationship between the two countries. I was very pleased when it worked out successfully, and I regretted it deeply when it didn't. I think that pretty well says it. I was a young enough man and had few, if any, prejudices and predispositions. I was open minded and hope I still am. It couldn't have been at a better time in my life from the standpoint of being able to have a better understanding of the world of which I was a part.

Q: If a young person came to you today and asked, "Should I join the Foreign Service?" how would you respond to that?

WINE: Of course, any response I gave them today would be predicated on my own experiences which go back a decade and a half and may not be reflective of current conditions with which I am not familiar. I would have to qualify anything I said. I would have to make some prefatory remarks, suggesting that I spoke from another era.

Q: These will be read in another period, even if you were talking about today.

WINE: I would have to say that, in giving the individual the benefit of the doubt as far as the motivation of service and intention to serve at the highest degree of excellence, I can think of no higher calling than being able to represent your country to another country.

That suggests eliminating assignments domestically. I wouldn't say that. Assignments domestically are preparatory periods or coming back from time to time for further assignments down the road. I would tell my own children this if they would ask me. I would say that I can think of no higher calling. The cat's pretty much on your back to make a success of it.

I think I said a “calling” but I think it's more of a calling than a “cause” if I were to distinguish between them. It provides great rewards.

I further believe, however, that the individual has to examine his or her own temperament rather carefully as to how they think they might coexist and live successfully in another culture, of getting out of the culture shock business which frequently causes problems. Therefore, I think I would like to ask the questioner a number of questions myself to satisfy my notions as to whether I thought they had the temperament. That's somebody else's job, not mine, but you can always spot things here and there. If they're talking about the glory road or their expectations, or if they're talking about drudgery, it's not that because you have too many opportunities for your own initiative. I would say at this time in history, the world has shrunk the way it has and is so interdependent that one couldn't hope for a better opportunity to be a part of the world that we live in. I can't think of another one and I include commercial activities, commercial corporations, etc. These things are just very different because your priorities are different. I think that would be my response.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, I thank you very much. I appreciate this. It's been fascinating.

End of interview